



# South Carolina River News

Winter 1996

A Publication of South Carolina Department of Natural Resources

Volume 2, Number 1

## River Management

### Community-Based Planning and River Corridor Management

By Barry R. Beasley, Manager, S.C. River Conservation Program

Rivers can be described in a number of ways and from a variety of perspectives. A farmer may see the river as a source of water for irrigation. A developer may see the river as a natural amenity that will increase property values for riparian home sites. A fisherman sees the river in terms of habitat: snags, riffles, deep pools. A civil engineer sees the river in terms of its ability to spin turbines to produce electricity. Law enforcement officers may see the river as a series of problems: trespass, fish and game violations, river rescue problems. Municipal officials may see the river as a means of disposing of the community's waste. Recreational planners may see opportunities for greenways, bike paths, parks, or water trails.

Who among this group sees the river accurately? Obviously they all do. Each of these descriptions defines a river-related resource, but each also expresses a need or a value of an individual or group. Also, each view is based on a single dimension of the river; but the river is more complex than any one of its resources. It is an integrated, interactive natural system.

Among all of our natural resources, rivers may present the most complex and difficult management challenges. Rivers are intricate natural systems with an aquatic environment, a riparian zone where land and water meet, and adjacent lands characterized by multiple uses. Comprehensive, long-term management requires an understanding of the interre-

lated components of the natural river system and the human impacts on it.

The goal in constructing a comprehensive river corridor plan is to balance human needs while maintaining the natural assets of the river. Such a plan must be ecologically based and shaped by individuals who know and understand the river and who represent the community's river-related interests. This approach is referred to as community-based or citizen-based planning. It is also called multi-objective river management.

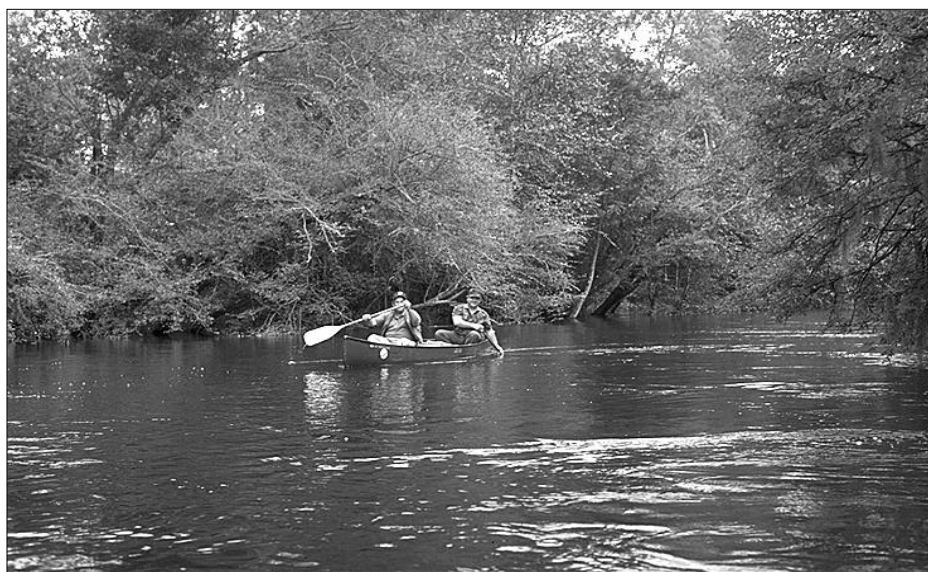
The first step in drafting a river corridor management plan utilizing this approach is to develop an understanding of the resources and values of the particular river. This is best accomplished by

assembling a group of individuals from the local community, river corridor, or watershed who understand and can represent the river-related interests and values in a planning committee. These individuals identify key issues that must be addressed in the river corridor plan.

The planning process contains four basic phases. In the first phase, the committee delineates the issues and forms subcommittees to study each particular issue or resource. Phase Two is the education phase. In this phase, river users and community members educate each other and the larger community about how they use the river and its importance to them. In the third phase, the management plan is written. The final phase is implementation.

The key principles of this approach are involvement and education. A comprehensive management plan should guide decision making for the wide spectrum of river users. A common vision must evolve that is based on a shared understanding of how each individual and group uses the river.

*See Planning continued on page 2*



*River-bordering landowners Mickey McDowell and Tom Gosski enjoy a fall canoe trip down the Scenic Lynches River (see story on page 3).*

## River Corridor Planning

# Building a Vision for the Cooper River

By Dexter Mead, Wildlife Habitat Council

Since 1992, citizens, corporations, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations have been cooperating to protect and enhance wildlife habitat along the Cooper River just north of the City of Charleston. Coordinated by the nonprofit Wildlife Habitat Council, the *Cooper River Corridor Project* was designed as a model voluntary partnership for sustainably managing wildlife habitat along waterways.

During its first several years, the project worked to establish communication, share information, and develop cooperative habitat enhancement projects with the more than 50 individuals and organizations involved in land and wildlife management along the river. As the project progressed, the participants began to favor a more holistic "ecosystem approach." This approach not only recognizes the links between habitats along the river, but also acknowledges the links between habitat and the critical economic and cultural resources of the Cooper River system.

Indeed, the Cooper River corridor possesses a unique blend of cultural, natural, and economic resources. Once an important Native American hunting ground and trading route, it was one of the first areas in South Carolina to be colonized. The corridor remains an important resource to both wildlife and people featuring a broad array of plants, animals, and habitats as well as dozens of historic sites, industrial facilities, recreational resources, and rural communities.

Because of the interconnections between the resources and the fact that the Cooper River corridor faces increasing development pressure, project coordinators saw the need for a more unified effort to maintain and improve all of the corridor's resource values. To fulfill this need, the project launched a public involvement campaign. The campaign aimed to involve the community in developing a long-term vision for how to protect and improve the natural resources, culture, economic opportunities, and overall quality of life in the Cooper River area.

At an October 1995 kickoff meeting, over 60 area residents and representatives from businesses, government, and nonprofit organizations gathered to discuss the special values of the Cooper River corridor and to develop a vision for the future. Values of the area emphasized by the meeting's participants included the close-knit, family-oriented community; the rural atmosphere; open space and scenery; wildlife and natural resources; recreational opportunities; and historic sites. In looking toward the future, residents said that they want to see more community involvement in decision making, proper land use planning, maintenance of the rural character of the land, protection of the area's natural and cultural resources, a safe environment, and better economic opportunities for community members.

Based on the enthusiasm and common interests of the meeting's participants, the *Cooper River Corridor Project* has continued to hold monthly community meetings. The resulting "community vision" will serve as a guide for future conservation and sustainable development activities. For more information, please contact Dexter Mead, Cooper River Project Coordinator, at 803-881-5395. ■

## River Naturalist



Commonly known as the swamp canary, the prothonotary warbler is a frequent resident of cypress swamps and heavily wooded stream borders in South Carolina. Distinguishing features include the golden head and breast, blue-gray wings, white under the tail, and the long dark bill. The bird is also easily recognizable by its very distinctive song: "sweet-sweet-sweet-sweet-sweet."

### Planning continued from page 1

This is the approach to river planning and management utilized by the Scenic Rivers Program and the River Corridor Planning Program. By bringing the key interests together around a single table, a common vision can be created that balances the needs of all river users. Obviously, this type of plan must be based in solid science and requires an objective approach to decision making.

We are beyond the time when we can afford to be unidimensional in our approach to resource management. Most all of our rivers are characterized by competing pressures. Society will continue to rely heavily on its rivers to fulfill a broad set of needs associated with our quality of life. Through community-based planning and citizen involvement, we can shape plans based on good science that will help us manage our complex riverine resources. ■

## Field Trip

# A Fall Day on the Lynches

By Ray Alexander, Lynches River Advisory Council

About twenty members and guests of the Lynches River Advisory Council met at Lee State Park for our fall canoe trip on October 10th. The purpose of the day-long meeting was to explore, by canoe, the upper eight miles of the fifty-four mile Scenic Lynches River.

After a brief lecture on water safety, the council travelled to the Highway 15 boat landing near Bishopville. It was a bright and warm day with just a hint of fall in the October air—ideal for boating. There was one ominous sign on this beautiful fall day. Recent rains had caused the river to rise and the water was a little swift.

The trip leader took extra care to advise everyone to wear a life jacket.

This proved to be an excellent precaution. Our excursion down the Lynches was less than ten minutes old when two paddlers ended up in the water after turning their boat crosswise to the current. Before the trip was completed, there were two more spills. Obviously, this section of the river proved challenging for beginners! Other than some embarrassment by those taking the plunge, the trip was informative and ended safely.

During the paddle down the Lynches, we saw many different forms of wildlife and vegetation. Protected as part of Lee State Park, most of the east bank of the river was forested. Some of the trees, which had missed the woodman's axe, were tremendous and stretched upwards

to impressive heights. Raccoon and white-tailed deer were observed along the shore. Several people reported spotting a bald eagle.

We stopped briefly for a delicious picnic lunch near the loop road in Lee State Park. Due to the flooding it was difficult to find a dry spot, but everyone ate heartily and enjoyed great fellowship.

After getting back on the river, we paddled by nice bluffs and then slipped under the Interstate 20 bridge toward our final destination, the old Field's Bridge landing. There was evidence of man and his activities along the way. There were a few places where trees and shrubs had been clearcut all the way to the river bank. We also saw a couple of unobtrusive cabins. However, Council members all concurred that the Lynches River is truly wild and scenic—the perfect place to spend a fall day! ■

## Building a Vision

# River Alliance Focuses on Columbia Riverfront

By Aaron Boyson and Susan DeFoe, The River Alliance

More than ninety years ago, a dream began: to develop the riverfront property in the Columbia area. Forty-plus plans later, the riverfront remains effectively undeveloped. Factors ranging from competing local governments to a relatively uninvolved community have made implementation as much of a dream as the plan itself. The River Alliance, a new public-private partnership in the Midlands, has been working to change history. The goal of the River Alliance is to maximize the potential of the riverfront through a regional, grassroots planning effort.

Formed in 1993, the River Alliance consists of elected officials from Richland and Lexington counties, Cayce, Columbia, and West Columbia as well as a representative of the state's Budget and Control Board. The group also includes private citizen representatives from the Central Midlands Regional Planning Council and the University of South Carolina. The

mission is to develop a comprehensive plan encompassing ninety miles of the lower Saluda, Broad, and Congaree rivers. A large part of Columbia's urban core will be covered under this plan.

One of the first major hurdles was coalescing local governments. This past September, the Alliance held an event called the "Race to the Finish," inviting local government officials to race down the lower Saluda toward a finish line of red tape to symbolize their unity and spirit of regionalism. The two county council chairs and the three mayors participated in the race.

The race kicked off a series of public awareness and input sessions, dubbed Dream Catching Ceremonies, held throughout the region to gather public dreams and visions for the riverfront. By mid-October, the Alliance staff had compiled thousands of dreams for the river gathered from citizens all over the region. The River Alliance will be the first group in ninety years to amass public

opinion and use it to develop a plan. By early 1996, the group hopes to have a completed plan to present to the public.

Area residents will have several opportunities to view the plan and offer feedback before final revision and approval. Key to the mission is the fact that the River Alliance hopes to market the plan to help bring the Midlands' communities what they asked for this past October, an opportunity to make their dreams come alive after ninety years and hundreds of pages of riverfront plans. ■



## South Carolina River News

Published by the South Carolina  
Department of Natural Resources,  
Water Resources Division, 1201 Main  
St., Suite 1100, Columbia, S.C. 29201,  
(803) 737-0800, fax (803) 765-9080

**Editor:** Rebecca Rideout  
**Design/Production:** Debra Lee  
**Graphics:** Chris Page

Reproduction permitted if source is  
cited.



## River Currents

The **SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC)** is starting up a new **Water Watch Program**. Participating groups will adopt a lake or river segment for projects such as stream surveys and water quality monitoring. The program will encourage a watershed focus. Water Watch Coordinator Andy Miller says, "We want people to take a look at the total picture— what is happening in the watershed and how might those activities affect the local lake or river?" During the first year, the program will conduct four to five pilot projects on waterbodies across the state. The projects will focus on a variety of watershed types— lakes, rivers, urban areas, rural areas, inland, and along the coast. Groups should be selected for the pilot projects by April 1996. For more information, call Andy Miller at 803-734-9238.

A lower Saluda River landowners meeting was held on Sunday, November 19th at **Riverbanks Zoo and Garden** in Columbia. The **Lower Saluda River Advisory Council** hosted the gathering

which drew a crowd of about 50 people. The meeting objective was to promote landowner awareness and involvement in the stewardship of the lower Saluda Scenic River corridor. The group was presented with an overview and update on conservation and development activities affecting the river. They were also introduced to the new **Scenic Rivers Stewardship Program** which encourages landowner participation in the conservation of scenic rivers through four land management options. Several landowners joined the program that very day by signing land registration agreements. Most of the others walked away with brochures and information that will, we hope, persuade them to join in the near future.

The October 1995 issue of nationally renowned **Paddler** magazine named **Cayce, South Carolina** (along with Columbia) one of the **top 10 canoe towns** in the United States! It's easy to understand how Cayce captured this honor—"Just about any water in the state is within striking distance of Cayce. There's the Edisto and the Saluda, and there's also the local favorite, the Congaree, formed when

the Broad and the Saluda meet in Columbia." The magazine praised **Adventure Carolina**, a local canoe livery, as "a solid paddling promoter".

**Beach Sweep/River Sweep** is an annual, one-day cleanup of the state's waterways co-sponsored by the **SC Department of Natural Resources** and **SC Sea Grant Consortium**. The sixth annual Sweep was held on Saturday, September 16, 1995. More than 6,800 volunteers teamed up to remove 63 tons of litter and debris from the state's waters. Cleanups were held on 71 inland waterways from the Wild and Scenic Chattooga in Oconee County to Lake Murray in the Midlands to lowcountry streams such as the Ashley and the Edisto. The **largest cleanup** was held on **Lake Hartwell** where more than 2,000 volunteers scoured tons of garbage from their lake. In **Beaufort County**, more than 600 volunteers combined efforts to clean every boat landing in the county!

Do **YOU** know of any river-related news or upcoming events? If so, send a short description to Becky Rideout for inclusion in **River Currents** or call and give me the scoop at 803/737-0800. ■

## South Carolina River News

South Carolina Department of Natural Resources  
Water Resources Division  
1201 Main Street, Suite 1100  
Columbia, S.C. 29201

Bulk Rate  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Permit #237  
Columbia, S.C.



The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, disability, religion, or age. Direct all inquiries to the Office of Human Resources, P.O. Box 167, Columbia, S.C. 29202.

1000 copies of this document were printed @ 36 cents per copy

Printed on Recycled Paper

